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STORM SONGS

By ANNA LOUISE STRONG



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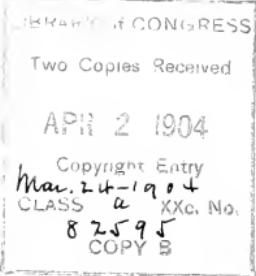
Storm Songs

and Fables

ANNA LOUISE STRONG

Class of 1906, Bryn Mawr

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To my Mother.

Storm Songs

THE STORM.

NOT in the tropic calms I sail, where the fragrant
breeze
Blows from a land of flowers over the summer seas ;
But under the chill of the blast, beat back by the
Storm-king's might,
Where the low-hung clouds at noon are black as a
starless night.

Fierce are the tossing breakers ; the storm is dark
above ;
Yet, in the depths of ocean, the warm gulf-currents
of Love
Bear with a silent power my ship to a certain goal.
Then, through the rain and rush of the tempest—
on, my soul !

Aye ! And the arm grows strong in the fight, and
the heart grows brave
In the crash of the thunderbolt and the roar of the
breaking wave.
There is a joy in conflict, and, after the tempests
cease,
Rest for the wind-racked ship in the blessed harbor
of peace.

Storm Songs

WEARINESS.

I AM so tired, Father ; I yearn for the long night's sleep,
Far in the shade of the forest, where murmur forever the deep
Low whispers of shadowy branches, in evening's wavering light.
I am so tired, Father ; I long for the rest of night.

What do I care for the struggle, and what is the joy of success ?
Give me rest in the calm of the forest's loneliness.
Alone in the silence of midnight, far from the surging sweep
Of passionate joy and sorrow, I long, I long for sleep.

Then, do I hope for a dawn ? Who knows what the morn may be ?
Sad or gay, what joy could the waking bring to me ?
Is there a deeper bliss for the soul that long has striven
Than thus, to sleep in the darkness, under the starlit heaven ?

NIGHT.

EVEN in youth, when life was happiest,

 Dear Night, I always loved thee. Not alone
When pain's sharp cry was hushed to quiet moan,
And I might sob my heart out on thy breast,
But when the sunlight reddened in the West
And turned to gray, and the pale moonbeams shone,
After the fairest days my heart had known,
In joy's sweet languor, then I sought thy rest.

And still, dear Night, I love thy loneliness,
For from thy black unfathomable deep
Of space, peace comes unto the comfortless,
And anguish fadeth with the fading light,
Until for utter weariness I sleep
In thine embrace, thou all-enfolding Night.

DREAMLAND.

WHEN at the close of day, the fading light
Sinks into darkness, and the last faint gleams
Of the red sun depart, and pale moonbeams
Shine through the scattered clouds; then, on my
sight
Arise fair phantom-shapes, more coldly bright
Than a broad snowfield in the starlight seems.
And in the West the shadowy land of Dreams
Glimmers thro' the chill darkness of the night.

So in my heart, when joy's fair golden sun
Has set forever, oftentimes arise
The phantom-shapes of hopes, and loves long gone,
And I sit mourning, when the day is done;
Mourning, yet hoping that the eastern skies
Will some time shine with the pale light of dawn.

THE BATTLE CRY.

O H, HO! for the battle, the fight is on,
And why should I fear, tho' the cannons roar,
And I strive alone, with the standard gone?

Still let me fight till the battle is o'er,
Altho' I may hope for success no more.
Oh, ho, for the battle! Fight on, fight on!

Failure seems certain, but what care I?
Whether the battle be lost or won,
Still let me strive 'neath the darkening sky,
Hoping, perhaps, when day is done,
That rest will come with the setting sun.
Oh, ho, for the battle, to live or to die!

Rest I shall find in the evening of life,
Rest untainted by cowardly thought,
Rest from the wearisome tumult and strife,
Knowing, whatever the issue, I fought
At my King's command, as His soldier ought.
Oh, ho, for the battle, the battle of life.

Storm Songs

MELANCHOLY.

WOULD I were a cloud in the burning west,
 In the sunset bright,
To fade into darkness and be at rest,
 Lost in the night.

Would I were a lily, to bloom, to grow,
 To die in the heat.

Life would be very short, I know,
 But 'twould be sweet.

Would I were a dewdrop to shine in the sun,
 For a moment fair,
To sparkle and vanish, when day has begun,
 Dissolved into air.

But why should I wish for what never can be,
 Tho' weary the years?
Life seems so very long, ah me!
 So full of tears.

Storm Songs

WHEN THE FROST COMES.

WHEN roses and lilies perish,
And violets fade from the glen,
Then, not till then,
Pale asters and gaudy geraniums we cherish.

When the hope of youth departs,
And ideals fade from our grasp,
Despairing, we clasp
The poor little loves that are left to our hearts.

The flowers of summer died ;
Little remains of our spring ;
To that we cling,
And sigh, and strive to be satisfied.

Storm Songs

AUTUMN EVENING.

ALL silent! Not the faintest quivering flutter;
Among the branches stirs no murmuring breath.
A melancholy that no heart can utter
Softens the numbing chill of death.

The shriveled leaves hang loosely from the branches,
The half worm-eaten golden-green and red.
The sunset, faded, pale, no longer glances
Across the twilight of the dead.

The gray of evening grows, with day departed
The last faint life, yet Nature never grieves.
Is death so beautiful, so quiet-hearted?
Then would that I were with the leaves.

MOUNTAIN ECHOES.

(Translation of Heine's "Bergstimme.")

THROUGH the mountain valley a knight doth ride,

Pensive and slow his pace.

"Oh, go I now to the arms of my bride,
Or into the grave's embrace?"

The mountain echoes replied :

"The grave's embrace."

Then spoke the knight, with a heavy sigh :

"In life can my woe never cease ?

Ah, well, if so early my death draws nigh,
Perhaps in the grave is peace."

The echoes made reply :

"The grave is peace."

With tears on his cheek he gazed around

In longing and unrest :

"If only in death can peace be found,
For me the grave is best."

The hollow echoes resound :

"The grave is best."

LOST DREAMS.

WHERE are the phantoms I loved so well,
The dreams I once could dream,
The fancies' aerial gleam
That flashed thro' the Eden from which I fell.

Is this the price of the knowledge we gain,
The cost of learning life:
That we loathe the aimless strife,
That ghosts depart and dreams seem vain.

I learned to live in the rise and fall
Of swift life's rush and hum.
I turn, I whisper: "Come."
I call my dreams, but in vain I call.

Life may answer, I cannot tell.
"Is there a blessing in truth,
Surpassing the dreams of youth?"
Ah! but I loved those dreams so well.

AU REVOIR.

FLASHING of golden gleams
Athwart a sullen monotone of gray.
Swiftly the darkening whirl of rain
Veils the sun-lit beauty of day,
But shall I think that only the land of dreams
Shall see the light again.

Stormy night enshrouds
All the rain-swept earth and the gloom above.
But in the gleam that a moment shone,
Thy face flashed in the light of love.
Space and time are only the wind-whirled clouds;
Storms cannot conquer the sun.

Only in memory now
Lives the light that shot thro' the tempest strife.
.Naught know I of the world of men;
I know of love that is stronger than life;
And since I love, I know, some day, somehow,
That we shall meet again,

Storm Songs

AIR CASTLES.

Far in the eastern skies,
Forever changing, yet forever fair,
I see, before the sun begins to rise,
My castle in the air.

In the dawn-shimmered sky,
Where the low-lying mist the hilltops shrouds,
The tall, sun-gilded castle gleameth, high
And turreted with clouds.

Its golden portals stand,
Within a world this earth can never mar,
No shadow-phantoms haunt that'fairy-land,
Beneath the morning star.

But when I seek that land,
My cloud-realm fades into the sunny day,
I cannot reach that fair, enchanted strand,
It is so far away.

Yet when the sky is dim,
And when the earth is dark, I gaze afar,
To see my dream-land on the eastern rim,
Beneath the morning star.

THE WOOING OF THE FLOWER.

TIS said that the South-Wind loved a flower,
And wooed her, long ago.
But alas, the North-Wind loved her too,
And he was the South-Wind's foe.

Notus was gentle and soft and mild,
And the flower loved him well,
For he talked of love and he sang and sighed
In the trees around her dell.

And one bright day in the early spring,
When the air was soft, and a tide
Of music swelled from each budding tree,
The flower became his bride.

The North-Wind heard and he vowed revenge,
And when autumn came again,
He breathed his rage on the icy blast,
And rushed to the haunts of men.

Then Notus fled, as he needs must fly,
Where the North-Wind reigns alone.
And Boreas spoke to the flowret thus,
In his softest, kindest tone:

Storm Songs

“Notus, thy cowardly lover is dead,
For he could not live near me,
But thou shalt be queen of my vast domains,
If only my bride thou’lt be.”

He took her hand in his icy palm,
But she died while he talked of love,
And he buried her deep in the frozen ground,
And heaped the snow above.

Then the North-Wind wept sad, frozen tears,
But the South-Wind never knew.
And still he thinks he will find his flower,
As he wanders the meadows through.

For oft, in the coldest winters come,
Hours when spring seems near,
Then the South-Wind roams thro’ the wasted fields
And seeks for his flowret dear.

But alas! ere ever he finds his bride,
Boreas comes, and then
Back he must flee to his own domain,
He must leave his love again.

Storm Songs

LIFE'S MUSIC.

SWEET, magically clear arose the music,
As softly perfect as a summer dawn.
Change but a note, touch but one tone discordant,
The harmony is gone.

A few full chords, Life's harmony of pleasure
A joyous melody, a festive dance,
And then, because we know not how to play it,
A jarring dissonance.

The ear will grow with hearing, in the future
With deeper knowledge than the earth affords,
We may discern some grandly planned sonata,
In those blurred, ill-played chords.

Could we but know our lesson, have more patience,
To play, just as the Master wrote the scroll,
No note would seem misplaced, but all, in concord,
Blend to a perfect whole.

And when the last clear chord to silence trembles,
And ends the piece so falteringly begun,
We need no praise but that of our great Teacher
Who says to us: "Well done."

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.

HOW many tread, in the twilight,
With hearts that are crushed and still,
The road that leads to the valley,
Away from the templed hill.

They are leaving their beautiful city,
The place where their hopes turned fears;
And naught remains of their longings
Save bitter, hopeless tears.

The Comforter draws near them
As they their steps retrace,
But their eyes are dimmed with weeping,
They see not the Master's face.

He walks in the twilight beside them,
Tenderly bidding: "Rejoice."
But they see Him not for sorrow,
They know not the Master's voice.

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And he follows, patient, loving,
On to the journey's end,
Till a light breaks in upon them,
And they see in the stranger their Friend.

And they know what seemed destruction
Was life in God's great plan.
And they glimpse His wondrous workings
In the destiny of man.

Back to the beautiful city,
Back to the templed hill,
They turn with joy, proclaiming
"The Lord is with us still."

Storm Songs

HIS PEACE.

HE said unto the sea: "Be still."
The waters, at His word,
Grew calm, obedient to His will,
And recognized their Lord.

He saith unto my troubled soul:
"Be still, I am thy rest."
And fiercely though the billows roll,
I feel His will is best.

Oh, restless heart, oh! troubled sea,
If thou obey His will,
However fierce the tempests be,
Peace comes with His "Be still."

Storm Songs

THE WEARY LAND.

IN the old days, when sunny were the skies,
The coming tempest fearfully I scanned
Dreading the life I could not understand.
Then suddenly, I saw the storm-clouds rise.
The sun grew dim; trembling, I hid mine eyes,
When lo! led onward by a mighty Hand
I found a refuge in the weary land
And my heart bounded with a glad surprise.

No longer through the mists of fear I move,
For if mine eyes grow dim with blinding tears,
My hand still clasps the guiding hand of Love.
Love broodeth o'er the raging tempest-strife,
And Love shall crown with peace the future,
years;
And unto perfect Love I yield my life.

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F a b l e s

HOW THE FLOWERS CAME TO EARTH.

Once upon a time the earth was very ugly, for there were no birds, the sun shone but dimly, and the flowers were all in heaven. So men were very mean and very wretched, for how could they be good when the world was ugly. And one day, a Voice said to the flowers, as they swayed in the breezes that breathed through the gates of pearl: "Why not go down to earth and make men happy?"

The Rose tossed her head and smiled: "Not I. I am needed here. What would heaven be without me?"

The Lily sighed: "It would be so cold on earth and the men would soil my lovely white petals."

The Anemone whispered: "Some one really ought to go, but I am too frail. I couldn't do much good, now could I?"

And the Violet said: "I will go, but I don't want to be the first. I am afraid."

But the little Spring-Beauty trembled in all her petals and murmured: "I will go down tonight. You must come afterwards."

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In the morning the woods were white and pink with dainty blossoms. The Child, who saw them, gathered his arms full, and ran to his mother, crying: "See, mamma, what lovely flowers!" And the mother answered, "How pretty," but she said it only to please the Child, for already the timid Spring-Beauties were dead. And within a week even the pink and white flowers in the woods had faded, for the earth was too cold and too ugly for them. And in the heart of the dying Spring-Beauty was a great sorrow, not because she had left the lovely plains of heaven, but because the world was just as dull and lifeless as it had been before, and her sacrifice was in vain.

But the next morning Violets came and then Anemones, the gold of Dandelions gleamed in the grass, and the white and blue of Innocents covered the dry places. Then the Lily said to the Rose: "I am going to earth, for it looks like a pleasant place." And the Rose answered: "No one will be left in heaven to admire my beauty. I too will go."

Then the Sun, who was in love with the Rose, shone down more brightly, and one of the creeping things of earth, thrilled with ecstasy, rose on the

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wings of the South-Wind, and became a Bird. So the world was filled with the joy of melody and color, and men were no longer mean and cruel, for how could they be when the earth was beautiful. Yet, while everyone praised the Rose and the Lily, and spoke tenderly of the Violet, no one but the Child remembered the Spring-Beauties, and he only said: "They were very pretty, but they faded so soon."

And the Rose said to the Lily: "See how beautiful we have made the earth."

And the Lily sighed in a self-complacent way: "Yes, it was hard for me to come, but I am glad that I am here. I hope the world appreciates the sacrifice."

THE CROCODILE.

A Crocodile lived in South Africa and made his daily meals off the natives. And one day a Missionary came along, and the Crocodile, being but an ignorant Crocodile, and not knowing any better, ate the Missionary. Now the Missionary wore clothes, and the Crocodile was not used to clothes, so they gave him indigestion. And the Crocodile said :

“That queer beast was evidently created in order to torment me. How can I believe in a kind Ruler of the Universe, who creates animals that are good for nothing in the world, but to make poor Crocodiles miserable.”

So the Crocodile went down home beneath the water, and a good little Crocodile came up to him. “Won’t you join the Crocodile church,” said the good little Crocodile.

“I’m afraid I can’t,” said the Crocodile. “I have intellectual doubts.”

THE LAND OF THOUGHT.

A Poet lived in the Land of the Real in the World of Men. He had neither money nor fame, but he had wings wherewith to fly into the Land of Thought, a land inaccessible to most men, because of a deep, dark gulf which divided it from the Real World. So the Poet spread his wings and flew far into the Thought-Land, but he always returned to earth and brought with him the beautiful spirits of that country to gladden the hearts of men. And all mankind praised the loveliness of the "Thoughts" which the Poet brought with him, but he himself knew that on the long, dark journey the wings of the spirits were torn and their garments rent, so that he could never hope to show them to the world in all their beauty, as he had seen them in the lovely meadows of their home. So his life was one long disappointment. At times he almost hated the Land of Thought, and vowed never to enter it again, but an irresistible longing impelled him.

At last, one autumn day, he wandered too far into that beautiful country till he came to the Isle of Dreams. For the Isle of Dreams is not far from

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the Land of Thought, but the way lies over a narrow strip of blue, sun-kissed sea, and it is easy to pass from one to the other.

The Poet never returned to earth. For the scent of the flowers was so soothing, the soft warmth of the Indian summer so peacefully enchanting, that he lost his high ideals, and was content to dream forever in the lovely island.

But the World kept the Thoughts which the Poet had once brought, and as the years went by they grew more beautiful. For they blessed the Land of the Real and in blessing it, they grew fairer, until they were more lovely than the Poet himself had ever seen them. But the Poet slept on a bed of tube-roses and poppies in the Isle of Dreams, and whenever he woke he sighed to himself: "How wise I was to stop that useless striving in the Land of the Real."

And then he slept again.

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“MAN IS THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS.” IS HE?

A Caterpillar fell into a swiftly rushing river and was carried rapidly down-stream. Now the stream was spanned by a railroad bridge. And it came to pass that a train was hurrying towards the bridge, and the train was the Pennsylvania Limited. And the train crashed through the bridge, and there were two hundred people killed. But a splinter of the bridge floated off down the stream, and the Caterpillar caught hold of it and escaped death.

And the Caterpillar said: “How kind Providence is!”

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THE PARROT AND VIREO.

It was on a trip South that the Warbling Vireo first met the Parrot.

“How beautifully you sing,” said the Parrot.

“Oh, that’s nothing,” replied the Vireo. “With a voice like yours you could soon learn. But if I could only talk.”

“It’s very easy,” said the Parrot. “With a little practice a bird of your intelligence could do it.”

Then the two birds parted, for the summer had come, and the Vireo returned to the northern woods. She went no more to the gatherings of the birds, for singing had lost its charm. And when another Vireo asked her to share his nest, and sing to him all day long, she replied: “Singing is all very well for others, but I have a career before me. I am going to learn to talk.”

So she practiced talking till her voice was cracked, and when her life was almost over, she had learned three words. But her courage was undaunted.

“If I live long enough,” she said, “and work very hard, perhaps some day the Parrot will be willing

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to give me lessons. Oh, how fine it would be to have talent like hers!"

Meanwhile the Parrot left her friends, and refused to talk any more. She withdrew to a lonely part of the woods and practiced the song of the Warbling Vireo. She worked very hard and obtained little result. Sometimes she envied the care-free Parrots who had nothing to do but talk, but she consoled herself bravely.

"Happiness is for some," she said, "and fame for others. The Vireo said I had a voice. Perhaps if I practice all the time, the day will come when she will not be ashamed to associate with me. But what a thing it would be to have talent like hers."

Moral:

I labour long for another's gift,
A gift I may not gain;
And he pursues for weary days
The talents I disdain,
And both neglect the gifts we have,
And both of us strive in vain.

A TALE OF THE LORELEI.

The Lorelei rose from her rock in the river Rhine, for a longing came upon her to see the world of men. She combed out her golden hair, and laid her golden harp in a cave of the cliff, and went over the earth till she came to a cottage. Within sat a man and a maid. The eyes of the man were loving, and the eyes of the maid were full of hope and trust. Then the Lorelei laughed a scornful laugh and went back to her rock again. And she sang:

“Glad am I that I am a passionless nymph. Love is the folly of youth.”

So she sang to her golden harp while the sun went down and the stars shone above the smooth water. Her song was as gay as the waterfall on a moonlit night. And she sang for seven years.

Then the Lorelei rose from her rock in the river Rhine, for a longing came upon her to see the world of men. She combed out her golden hair, and laid her golden harp in a cave of the cliff, and went over the earth till she came to the cottage again. Within sat a maid, and her eyes were full of tears,

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for the man had gone, and she knew not when he would return.

“Yet he loves me still,” smiled the maid, “and hope is sweet.”

Then the Lorelei laughed a puzzled laugh and went back to her rock again. And she sang:

“Glad am I that I am a passionless nymph. Love is the sorrow of youth.”

So she sang to her golden harp while the sun went down and the stars shone above the smooth water. Her song was as strange as the waterfall on a cloudy day. And she sang for seven years.

Then the Lorelei rose from her rock in the river Rhine, for a longing came upon her to see the world of men. She combed out her golden hair, and laid her golden harp in a cave of the cliff and went over the earth till she came to the cottage again. Within sat a maid, and her eyes were dry, but her cheeks were pale with grief, for the man was faithless to her, and would never come again.

“Yet I love him still,” the maiden sighed, “and memory is sweet.”

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Then the Lorelei laughed not at all, but turned away and went back to her rock again. And she sang no more to her golden harp while the sun went down, and the stars shone above the smooth water. But she sat in the cave of the cliff and wondered at what she had seen. And the Lorelei found no answer.

THE MAKING OF A PHILOSOPHER.

There once lived a Philosopher who was so wise that he understood everything that ever happened, and could explain a great many things that never happened at all. And what was still better, the Philosopher knew that he knew all things, and he desired to impart his wisdom, that the world might be improved by it. So he went forth one winter afternoon, to take the precious gift of knowledge to the men who needed it so much. And he met a Laborer, who was shoveling snow.

“My dear Sir,” said the Philosopher, making a painful but praiseworthy attempt to speak in words that the Laborer would understand. “It would put new spirit into your labor if you had something interesting to think about. Study the snow-flakes. Observe the multitudinous shapes which water takes on in crystallization, and yet what harmony prevails. All the snow-crystals are hexagonal in shape. You will never, no matter how much you study and observe, discover a snow-flake which is not so formed. Think of it, my friend.”

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“Are you daft?” said the Laborer. “As if any one was fool enough to care. The snow’s just as hard to shovel whether the cursed little snow-flakes are—what shape did you call it?—or not.”

The Philosopher turned away, sorrowing over the inability of the uneducated to appreciate knowledge. Then he met a Poet. The Poet sat on a hill-top looking at the sun-set, and watching the mists rise up from the valley.

“Ah,” said the Philosopher. “You love nature. You have observed. You will appreciate the knowledge I can give. Do you care to know why the sunset is red? Well, in the first place, the sun, in some unknown way, sets up vibrations in the ether. These take the form of a transverse wave motion. When they reach the upper strata of this planet’s atmosphere,—But I see you are impatient. Perhaps you know all about it. Shall I explain then how it is that the mist appears. It is on account of the relative humidity of—”

“What are you talking about,” said the Poet. “As if I didn’t know that the mist was the shroud which Mother Earth weaves for the dead river-fairies. And, as for the red of the sunset, the Sun has been fight-

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ing his death-fight with the Prince of Darkness, and the sky yonder is the blood-stained battleground."

The Philosopher turned away, sorrowing over the inability of the dreamer to think logically. Then he met a Youth. The Youth was leaning against a lamp-post, twirling his fingers, for he hadn't enough sense to do anything else.

"Why do you twirl your fingers?" said the Philosopher."

"Because I have nothing better to do."

"This is indeed a wise man," said the Philosopher. "He refrains from action because he has not solved satisfactorily the problem of the relative importance of various duties. Young man, a youth who meditates so long about unimportant things, will surely make a great philosopher. Come with me and I will teach you the unreality of the world, the Infinite Nothingness of the All. You shall be famous, and I will go down to posterity as your teacher."

"And what must I do?" said the youth.

"Speculate about things. Delve into the mysteries of Nature."

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“That sounds interesting, and not at all like work,” thought the Youth.

So he went with the Philosopher and in time he too became celebrated, for his ideas were so startlingly strange and utterly ununderstandable that all men wondered at him. And his friends said:

“It’s well that he’s taken to Philosophy. He was never any good at work.”

THE BROAD STREAM.

A stream arose in the mountains and dashed down a narrow ravine. "How happy I shall be," said the Stream, "when I escape from the narrowing influences which have confined me during my youth. I shall be broad, like the great river. Breadth is the one thing needed in life."

So the Stream left the ravine, and as it passed through the low fields, its only desire was to be broad.

"I shall be a great river, and ships will sail upon me," said the Stream, not knowing that a river must have depth as well as breadth.

Then the Stream came to the flat-lands that lie on the edge of the desert, and the Stream became so broad that one could hardly see across, and so shallow that the rocks on the bottom pierced the surface, and the smallest row-boat could not float upon the water. Then the Stream reached the desert, and the sands of the desert swallowed it, and it was seen no more.

Yet the Stream obtained its wish, for it became a swamp, and the swamp was *very* broad.

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